

Duane Laughlin of Griswold, Iowa, had tried just about everything—from concrete to wire—but nothing worked. A waterway running through his farm had continued to cut back a large ditch causing erosion and water quality concerns. The ditch was nearly 18 feet deep, 200 feet long, and actively eroding when Laughlin found the solution—in EQIP.

Laughlin enrolled 295 acres into EQIP in 1998, and began work on his conservation plan with technical assistance from the NRCS and the East Pottawattamie SWCD. “The first year we did upland treatment and built lots of terraces,” says Laughlin, who has been a district cooperator since 1987. This was an important first step in controlling excessive water coming off the hills during rain storms, he explained. “Incentives with EQIP were good, so we did a lot of the terracing that first year,” he said.

In 1999 the Laughlins installed a grade stabilization structure. “We wanted to try this route to prevent erosion and protect the stream from further deepening and widening. We knew the grade stabilization structure was a good idea, but expensive. The EQIP cost share funds made it cost efficient to pursue the structure.”

Duane, his brother Tom, and their father Bud, farm 2,700 acres in Pottawattamie County. “This is really a family operation, and has been for many years,” explains Duane. His parents, Bud and Margaret, have been on the land since 1966. Bud is semi-retired, but is the “main man” in the spring and fall. Duane and Tom began farming in 1977.

Some people that weren’t typically involved in conservation participated in EQIP, says Laughlin. Greg Mathis, NRCS District Conservationist in Oakland gives Duane and his neighbors some of the credit. “Duane saw EQIP as a good thing and decided to take advantage of it. He promoted EQIP to his four landlords, who also got involved in the program,” said Mathis. The landlords have installed terraces, small grade stabilization structures, and grassed waterways.

Bud agrees, “Duane really pushes conservation, he’s got all of his landlords terracing now.”

Most of Laughlin’s farming operation is in the heart of Farm Creek Watershed, which is a pretty close knit community, says Mathis. “It turned out that people liked the idea of EQIP and embraced it as a community,” says Mathis.

Benefits to Laughlin’s operation have included reduced erosion, stabilized streambanks and improved water quality. Under his EQIP contract Laughlin also began an integrated crop management program (ICM). “EQIP allowed us to finish terracing some fields and to correct some new ditches that were beginning to form. It also helped me to focus on applying only the fertilizer and pesticide that I really needed—this saved me money,” says Laughlin. “It feels good to know that I’ve got a plan in place to take care of the land, and the money is there to do it through EQIP.”

**Duane & Sondy Laughlin,
children Trevor & Jessica,
Tom & Wilma Laughlin,
children Craig & Jenny,
Bud & Margaret Laughlin,
Pottawattamie County**

Controlling erosion

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—Duane Laughlin, landowner



Left: Landowner Duane Laughlin (r) discusses his conservation plan with NRCS District Conservationist Greg Mathis (l) near the grade stabilization structure. Above: Landowners Duane and Bud Laughlin.

can yield many rewards